United Nations A/53/135

General Assembly

Distr.: General
2 June 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Items 88 and 93 of the preliminary list*

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Question of East Timor

Note verbale dated 2 June 1998 from the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

1. The Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations presents his compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to call his attention to the information provided by the Mission in its note verbale of 20 May 1997 (A/52/152), as required by Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, the terms of which remain valid.

2. As in previous years, since the Government of Portugal continues to be de facto deprived of the exercise of its responsibilities for the administration of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor, owing to the latter's illegal occupation by Indonesia, thus preventing its people from exercising freely their right to self-determination, it remains unable to provide the information concerning that territory required by Article 73 *e* of the Charter. Nevertheless, the Government of Portugal would like to draw attention to the following:

Different sources, including credible non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as the United States State Department, continue to report on the serious human rights situation in East Timor, justifying the gravest concern.

1. Political prisoners

3. In July 1997, President Nelson Mandela called for the release of East Timorese political prisoners, in particular Xanana Gusmão, with whom he met during his visit to Indonesia earlier that month. Mr. Mandela stressed that "unless the political leaders, including Xanana Gusmão, are set free, it will not be possible to normalize the situation in East Timor". In spite of this strong political sign from one of the most respected and charismatic world leaders, the Indonesian Government has made no move in that direction.

4. Furthermore, East Timorese continue to be persecuted for the peaceful expression of their beliefs. Amnesty International attests that "at least 18 East Timorese prisoners of conscience were sentenced during 1997". According to the organization, "the reduction in this number from

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previous years hides another trend, which is the increasing number of short-term arbitrary arrests".

2. Arbitrary arrests and detention

5. During 1997, a pattern of widespread arbitrary arrests and detentions, following civil disturbances and the increase of the activity of the armed resistance, was registered throughout the territory. "Detention in East Timor can be arbitrary in several different ways. It can be arbitrary because those carrying out the arrests and detention are not authorized to do so under Indonesian law. It can be arbitrary because the persons detained are shown no warrant, given no reason for their arrest and have severely limited access to legal counsel. It can be arbitrary because it is based solely on information extracted under torture or other duress. It can be arbitrary because the law under which detainees are held is itself so broadly worded that its application constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of expression or assembly". (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C). This is confirmed by the United States State Department, which reports that "in East Timor, military units regularly detain civilians for interrogation; most are held in extra-legal military detention centres, often with no notification of relatives, mistreated for several days and then released".

6. In February 1997, four days of civil unrest in Viqueque led to the arrest of over 100 people. The *Jakarta Post* reported the incident as having started when a group of pro-integration youths attacked a group of church activists. Fighting continued for four days before the military intervened. The East Timor deputy police chief, Colonel Atok Rismanto, was quoted by *Agence France-Presse* as saying that a total of 109 people had been arrested and were being questioned to determine who would become suspects in the case. According to Amnesty International, 105 people were later released, many of whom had been tortured or ill-treated while in custody (Amnesty International; ASA 21/06/97; ASA 21/07/97). Police Chief, Colonel Yusuf Muharram, said four people "who engaged in destruction were being interrogated and were suspected of causing the incident". No information was given about their names or whereabouts.

7. According to Amnesty International, as many as 48 people were detained in connection with a peaceful demonstration of East Timorese who attempted to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during his visit to Dili on 23 March 1997. Many of them were initially denied access to medical treatment and to their families. Most were subjected to ill-treatment, including beatings by the security forces (Amnesty International; ASA 21/17/97; ASA 21/18/97).

8. In May 1997, during the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the Indonesian elections, an increase in the activities of the armed resistance met with the launching of an intensive military operation throughout East Timor, apparently aimed at members of the clandestine front and the East Timorese Armed Resistance. According to Human Rights Watch, military teams systematically rounded up large numbers of people, detaining them for days or weeks at a time, without a warrant or detention order, intimidating or torturing them so that the army could get information about possible suspects. The military authorities claimed that over 100 people were arrested in these operations, particularly in Dili and in the Baucau district. They did not generally have access to legal counsel or to their families. There was also concern that the Indonesian security forces' retaliation to the attacks "may have spread beyond those directly responsible and may have resulted in the arrest of people involved only in peaceful activities in support of East Timorese independence" (Amnesty International; ASA 21/41/97).

9. In an opinion handed down on 15 May 1997, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the Commission on Human Rights concluded that the detention of 21 East Timorese, convicted in connection with the riots that broke out in Baucau between 10 and 11 June 1996, was arbitrary because several fundamental rights of the suspects had been ignored by the authorities, including presumption of innocence, the right to counsel of one's own choice and the right not to be compelled to confess guilt.

10. On 2 April 1998, at 4 a.m., eight East Timorese were arrested when members of the Indonesian military assaulted a house where they had gathered for a clandestine resistance meeting. Four of them, Marçal Guterres, Basílio Mendonç, Manuel Sarmento and António Freitas, are still in detention and awaiting trial, the others were taken to Becora prison, but it is not known if they are still in detention. Centralized public registers of all detainees and their place of detention could prevent the risk of torture or "disappearance", in particular if they were made available to lawyers, relatives and to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

3. Excessive use of force by the security forces

11. A pattern of violence and abuse by police and the military in dealing with peaceful demonstrations or civil disturbances, including beatings, shootings, arbitrary arrest and detention, was observed on various occasions.

12. On 23 March 1997, during the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Dili, demonstrators gathered outside Hotel Makhota where he was staying in an attempt to bring their concerns to his attention. According to reports the demonstration began peacefully but was violently dispersed by the security forces.

13. On 29 March, *Reuters* reported the results of the Indonesian National Commission for Human Rights preliminary investigation into this incident. After visiting those detained at Becora prison and those under arrest at the military hospital, the Commission condemned the level of brutality and confirmed that a total of 37 protesters had been beaten: "they have swollen eyes, mouths, backs and chests. Some haven't eaten for four days because they can't as the result of the beating".

14. On 14 November 1997, a confrontation broke out at the University of East Timor in Dili, between students and members of the security forces. At least five youths are known to have been wounded by gunfire, although the security forces claimed that they had only fired warning shots in the air. According to the East Timor Human Rights Centre, 16 students were arrested immediately after the confrontation. One of the students, who received a life-threatening wound in the neck, was forcibly removed from an ICRC vehicle by police. This brutal action, in blatant disrespect of ICRC's humanitarian role, prompted the organization to make a formal protest to the Indonesian authorities (*ICRC News*, 97/46). Although the Indonesian authorities acknowledged the incident, the security forces' behaviour was downplayed.

15. On 24 November 1997, Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights announced findings on a preliminary inquiry into the incident. According to *Reuters*, the Commission stated that "based on information from official and reliable sources, acts of violence, which were a violation of human rights, were found. For example, students suffered gunshot wounds, their teeth were smashed, faces swollen and bruised as a result of being hit".

4. Torture

16. East Timorese taken into military and police custody are regularly subjected to torture and ill-treatment and are routinely denied access to legal counsel, medical treatment and their families. The risk is much higher when the identity of those arrested and their place of detention are not disclosed and before people have been formally charged with a criminal offence. According to Human Rights Watch, "torture, particularly with electric shocks, but also with a variety of instruments such as rattan, metal pipes and electric cable, is a standard method of interrogation" (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C).

17. On 6 February 1997, six people were arrested in the hamlet of Nassuta, Ulmera village, and taken in for questioning to the Liquica district command. Some of the men were given electric shocks and one of them, Natalino Soares, was reportedly forced to agree to become an informant for the military. They were released the following day (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C).

18. On 26 March 1997, a joint team of the Indonesian special forces, Kopassus, and the youth militia, Gardapaksi, arrested Vicente da Costa on suspicion of having contact with the guerrillas. He was reportedly tortured with lighted cigarettes in Kopassus Post No. 1 before being released on 28 March with his body covered with burn marks (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C).

19. On 30 April 1997, five East Timorese were arrested in the hamlet of Metagou on charges of having contact with guerrillas. They were brought to the police command in Bazartete where they were beaten with rifle butts and given electric shocks (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C).

20. Luis Afonso, a 19-year-old student, was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the beating of an intelligence agent as well as the police commander Lt. Col. Beno Kilapong, on 24 December 1996, following Bishop Belo's return home after having received the Nobel Peace Prize. He was arrested without warrant and taken to the district police command. During interrogation, he was ordered to strip and interrogators proceeded to torture him until he gave the names of everyone he could think of who had taken part in the incident. According to his lawyer, he was hit over the head with a plastic chair, his head was put in a plastic bag and his genitals were burned with lighted cigarettes. The fingernails of his thumbs and big toes were also pulled out (Human Rights Watch/Asia; September 1997, Vol. 9, No. 9 C).

21. Eight East Timorese, detained in September 1997 in Dili and Semerang, who were allegedly in possession of explosives, were reportedly subjected to ill-treatment and torture, including electric shocks. One of them, Constâncio dos Santos, has suffered the severance of two of his fingers (Amnesty International UA; ASA 21/80/97).

22. On 11 September 1997, Sabino Barbosa Ximenes was detained in Dili by members of the Special Intelligence Unit. He is believed to have been taken to the Police Resort Headquarters. Allegedly, he was accused of being a member of the East Timorese clandestine resistance. Sources have reported that, on the day of his arrest, he was taken to a torture centre in Colmera, Dili, where he was subjected to electric shock, burned with cigarettes, cut with razor blades and had his fingernails pulled out (ETHRC, Ref. UA 27/97).

23. On 1 January 1998, members of the mobile brigade arrested Elízio Pinto Guterres Soares, an East Timorese university student living in Semerang, following an argument between students and police, who reportedly ordered them to stop the New Year's Eve party they were holding, claiming it was disturbing the Muslims during their month of fasting. Elízio Soares was taken for questioning to police headquarters, where he was kicked on his side several times until one of his ribs was broken and he collapsed (ETHRC, Ref. R2/98, 15/01/98).

24. In his report to the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1998/38 and Add.1), the Special Rapporteur on Torture informed the Commission that "the persistence and consistency of the allegations he received justify continuing concern with the issue". Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur considered that the continuing unwillingness of the Government of Indonesia to invite him to visit East Timor "could be construed as being aimed at avoiding direct and independent evaluation of the allegations".

5. Unfair trials

25. The pattern of abuse does not cease when people are formally charged with a criminal offence. Political trials in East Timor fall short of international standards. Elements of unfairness include denial of access to independent legal counsel, withholding of information from the defendants, use of testimony extracted under torture or without the presence of lawyers and refusal to hear witnesses for the defence. Furthermore, Indonesia's criminal code, in particular "hate-sowing" articles that punish expressing "hatred" towards the Government, are frequently used in East Timor to imprison individuals engaging in peaceful political activities.

26. Several East Timorese are currently detained and awaiting trial for their involvement in peaceful demonstrations or for their alleged involvement with the armed resistance or the clandestine front, namely in connection with their involvement in a demonstration to bring their concerns to the attention of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on 23 May 1997 and with the disturbances which occurred on Bishop Belo's return from the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony on 24 December 1996.

27. On 11 December 1997, two East Timorese men were sentenced to death after being found guilty of participating in an ambush of a truck carrying members of the Indonesian security forces. This is the first time that the death penalty has been handed down by courts in East Timor since its occupation by Indonesia in 1975. Francisco da Costa, aged 36, and Luís Maria Silva, aged 57, were tried by the Baucau District Court. They were charged with murder, separatist activities and illegal possession of firearms. The two men were defended by court-appointed lawyers because their families were afraid to appoint their own lawyers. According to Amnesty International "this and other long standing concerns about the Indonesian judicial system, raise fears that their trial may not have met international standards". At least 53 other East Timorese are currently detained and facing trial for their alleged involvement in the attacks during the elections, in May (Amnesty International, ASA 21/90.97).

6. Extrajudicial executions and "disappearances"

28. During his visit to Indonesia and East Timor (3 to 7 December 1995), the High Commissioner for Human Rights recommended the continuing investigation of the violent incident of 12 November 1991 and asked the Government of Indonesia to pay compensation to the families of the victims. Although the Indonesian authorities have recognized responsibility, families of those who were killed in the incident have received no compensation. No new efforts have been undertaken to account for those still missing. Establishing the truth about the past and ensuring adequate redress for victims and their families would contribute enormously to the efforts at finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the problem of East Timor.

29. The misgivings surrounding the death of David Alex, second in command of the armed resistance, on 25 June 1997, and the controversial explanations presented by different official sources raise doubts as to whether he may

have been summarily executed. The fate of the other five men arrested with David Alex is still unknown.

30. On 14 January 1998, *Reuters* reported that the bodies of four East Timorese men had been found floating in a river by villagers. Francisco Martins Dias, a local district chief, told *Reuters* the four men were among a group of eight who had been abducted from the village of Coilima on 3 January by a group of unidentified armed men, believed to be linked to the military. Two of the victims appeared to have died from gunshot wounds and the other two of injuries caused by sharp objects.

31. The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has reported an increase in the number of individuals being detained on suspicion of being involved in subversive activities. "In most of the cases reported to the Working Group, the sources alleged that individuals are being held incommunicado and they express a fear that victims may be subjected to torture or extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. The Sources also report that attempts by family members to locate the disappeared individuals by making inquiries with government officials are routinely unsuccessful" (E/CN.4/1998/43).

32. On 13 May 1998, the East Timor Human Rights Centre reported that it had received information from reliable sources that an East Timorese man, Custódio da Silva Nunes, was shot dead by Indonesian security personnel on 7 May. Custódio Nunes was a former public servant. Prior to his death, it is believed that he had been persecuted by Indonesian military as he was suspected of involvement in the East Timorese clandestine resistance. (East Timor Human Rights Centre UA 4/98).

7. Human rights violations against women

33. Women in East Timor are particularly vulnerable to gender specific human rights violations, including rape and sexual harassment. These violations often go unreported due to the lack of independent monitoring and because victims of sexual abuse are less likely to report their cases. Women who are taken in police or military custody are frequently subjected to sexual abuse.

34. Celina da Costa, aged 20, and Olga Quintão Amaral, aged 19, were among the thirty-three youths detained at Becora prison for their alleged involvement in the demonstration that took place at the Makhota Hotel, in Dili, on 23 March 1997. It has been alleged that on the day of their detention they had their clothes torn and were severely beaten and raped by members of the Indonesian military (East Timor Human Rights Centre, biannual report on human rights violations in East Timor, 30/08/97).

35. Inês Amaral was arrested in Viqueque on 25 February 1998, together with five other East Timorese. Allegedly she was carrying ammunition in a sack of rice, intended for members of the East Timorese National Liberation Army (FALINTIL). She is presumed to be in detention awaiting trial. She has been charged with possession of ammunition under emergency law regulations, which are frequently used by Indonesian police to detain political suspects when there is no strong evidence against them. Concerns that she may be subjected to torture are heightened by the fact that she has had no access to her family and has only met with her legal representative once since her arrest (ETHRC UA 3/98).

36. Some women are harassed simply because a family member is suspected of being involved with the armed resistance or the clandestine front. Beatriz Ximenes' husband, David Dias Ximenes, was arrested on the suspicion of being the mastermind behind the 28 May 1997 assault on the mobile brigade headquarters. On 3 June, she was picked up by the police and told that she was being taken to see her husband's lawyer. She was in fact taken to a police station in Comoro and interrogated. She was released at around midnight that day, but it is believed she continues to be subjected to intimidation (ETHRC UA 12/97).

8. Requests for asylum at foreign embassies in Jakarta

37. During 1997, 30 East Timorese sought asylum in several foreign embassies in Jakarta. Twenty-three requests for asylum by East Timorese have been registered since January 1998. All, except six who requested asylum at the Austrian Embassy on 19 September 1997, have been allowed to leave the country and are currently living in Portugal. The Indonesian authorities have refused Avelino Coelho da Silva and his companions authorization to leave the country, due to his alleged involvement in the bomb blasts that took place earlier that month in Semerang. All those detained in Dili and Semerang in connection with this incident, including Avelino's brother, Adelino Coelho da Silva, have been severely tortured. The way the Indonesian authorities have handled their cases raises fear that the asylum seekers at the Austrian Embassy would risk torture or "disappearance" and would not, in any case, be granted a fair trial if they were to leave the Embassy.

9. Excessive military presence

38. Indonesia's overwhelming military presence has an enormous impact on the human rights situation and is undoubtedly the cause of serious tension as people are at all times reminded that they are under a repressive military occupation. Human Rights Watch reports that, "Indonesian military forces in East Timor include regular police, mobile brigade police, troops from Indonesian infantry battalions, units of Indonesian special forces, Kopassus, at least one air force battalion, local territorial troops, a variety of paramilitary forces and an extensive intelligence network. ... The current number of troops is not certain. In 1993, the Indonesian army had eight battalions in East Timor, each comprising 700 men. Two were withdrawn in 1995, but any reduction in troops was more than offset by the creation of local battalions, as well as by a variety of military and paramilitary groupings".

39. The United States State Department confirms the "unjustifiably high" Indonesian military presence in East Timor, "totalling more than 16,000 personnel. The Government ... also relied on bands of youths, organized and directed by the military, to intimidate and harass its opponents".

40. Recruitment of East Timorese into military ranks and paramilitary groupings heightens tension amongst the population and causes a climate of suspicion, which often results in disturbances and violence leading to further retaliation by the security forces. Concern is felt that, if the underlying human rights problems are not seriously addressed, this climate may lead to a radicalization of the situation.

10. Massive Indonesian migration

41. Although in recent years Indonesia has significantly reduced its official transmigration programme, Indonesian migrants have continued to flow into the territory and have received indirect government support in the form of development assistance or contracts with the armed forces or local government.

42. Massive Indonesian migration and exclusion from employment (including the civil service) and development opportunities have caused resentment among the East Timorese, in particular among the younger generation, which is the most affected by the high level of unemployment prevailing in the territory (63 per cent, according to Rui Gomes, an East Timorese scholar and former civil servant in East Timor).

> "Economic marginalization of the East Timorese, through forced expropriation of land resources, centralization of the economic process in the hands of the Indonesians, suppression of workers' rights and exploitation of cheap labour, is fundamental to the colonial hegemony. The reason is that by being economically marginalized, the colonized become very dependent and powerless and thus succumb easily to colonial oppression. The presence of migrants in the territory has become an effective policy aimed at breaking up social cohesion and cultural identity. Colonial control becomes effective when local people are divided and disempowered". (Rui Gomes, in "Development or Colonialism", University of Helsinki, 28 to 29 April 1998.)

11. United Nations sponsored talks

43. Mr. Kofi Annan brought a new impetus to the United Nations sponsored talks. Ambassador Jamsheed Marker was appointed as the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the question of East Timor, with a mandate to represent him in all aspects of his good offices pertaining to this issue, including the talks between the Governments of Portugal and Indonesia, and the consultations with a cross-section of East Timorese. At the ninth round of the tripartite talks, all parties agreed to a new format for the negotiations proposed by the Secretary-General. The new format established a dual track process, including the tripartite talks, which should henceforth continue at working level, and the All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue. Parties also agreed that the tripartite talks would include the free and informal discussion of a wide range of issues. These discussions have been taking place on a confidential basis.

44. Portugal welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a meeting with the Prime Minister of Portugal and the Vice-President of Indonesia at the margins of the Asia-Europe Meeting in London, which could have brought a new impetus to the talks, had it not met with Indonesia's opposition. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General was able to hold two separate meetings with the Portuguese and Indonesian delegations.

12. All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue

45. The All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue is intended to contribute to the Secretary-General's efforts through the free and informal discussion of practical ideas, which may have a positive impact on the situation of East Timor and promote a positive atmosphere for the talks. Austria hosted the three meetings of the Dialogue held so far (2 to 5 June 1995 and 19 to 22 March 1996, Burg Schlaining; 20 to 23 October 1997, Krumbach).

46. At the third meeting of the All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue, participants expressed their deep concern at the escalation of violence in the territory and urged that appropriate measures be taken to promote and protect human rights in East Timor. Participants also suggested an exchange of visits between East Timorese from inside and outside the territory.

13. United Nations Commission on Human Rights

47. The lack of any improvement in the human rights situation in East Timor led the European Union to introduce a draft resolution on East Timor at the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The draft resolution was strongly supported by members of different regional groups and was co-sponsored by a total of 34 countries. Unlike the previous year, having perceived that support for the draft resolution was growing stronger, Indonesia agreed to the negotiation of a Chairman's statement, which was eventually adopted by consensus.

48. This statement includes several undertakings by the Government of Indonesia, namely concerning access to East Timor by a programme officer in the field of human rights, within the framework of the technical cooperation agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the Government of Indonesia's decision to invite the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit East Timor in advance of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission. The Chairman's statement also stresses "the need for constructive action in order to promote a favourable atmosphere for further progress towards a solution".

14. International pressure

49. On 25 June 1996, the European Union adopted a Common Position on East Timor, which shall henceforth determine the policy of the European Union and its member States on this issue. Through this Common Position the European Union expressed its support for the United Nations sponsored talks, encouraged the continuation of the Dialogue and called on the Government of Indonesia to take effective measures in order to improve the situation of human rights in the territory. On 11 July 1996, 14 other countries associated themselves with the European Union's Common Position.[1]

50. In its memorandum to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, the European Union reaffirmed its support, hoping that it will be possible to achieve a "just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the problem of East Timor that will fully respect the rights of the people of East Timor in accordance with the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly and in accordance with the principles established by the Charter of the United Nations". The European Union also stressed the importance it attaches to the continuation of the All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue. The European Union recently announced that a Troika visit to East Timor is being prepared and should take place soon.

51. On 12 June 1997, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the elections in Indonesia and the situation in East Timor. The European Parliament condemned the lack of democracy in the elections, which it considered "a farce", called on the Indonesian authorities to free all political prisoners and to ban legislation that restricts political rights and freedom of association and of expression. The European Parliament also reiterated its support for the democratic forces that fight for democracy and human rights in Indonesia and in East Timor. Several members of the European Parliament have established a group on East Timor to implement and coordinate the Parliament's action regarding this issue, with a view to ensuring the exercise of self-determination by the people of East Timor.

52. On 25 May 1998, the Council of the European Union discussed the situation in Indonesia and the implications of the present situation for East Timor. It called on the Indonesian authorities to cooperate constructively with the efforts, conducted under the auspices of the Secretary-General, to obtain a just, global and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor as well as with the planned European Union Troika visit. It also recognized the particular importance of humanitarian assistance to East Timor.

53. At the summit of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries,[2] which took place in San Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, on 17 and 18 July 1997, the Ministers

reaffirmed their support to the self-determination of the people of East Timor and welcomed the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Bishop Belo and José Ramos Horta. The Community also expressed satisfaction and support for the new format of the United Nations sponsored talks and the continuation of the All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue. Finally, the Community expressed its concern on the worsening of the human rights situation in the territory and called on Indonesia to fully implement the recommendations of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

54. The Seventh Ibero-American Summit[3] welcomed the renewed efforts of the Secretary-General to give a new impetus to the dialogue, in order to achieve a solution for the problem of East Timor in accordance with international norms and principles.

55. Other members of the international community, such as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and South Africa have voiced their concerns and support for the plight of the people of East Timor. This support has been conveyed in different ways, including the revision of arms exports policies, the suspension of military cooperation programmes with Indonesia, the expression of support for the United Nations sponsored talks and the continuation of the All-Inclusive Intra-East Timorese Dialogue, raising the problem of East Timor with the Indonesian authorities and calling for the release of East Timorese political prisoners, including Xanana Gusmão.

56. Despite mounting international pressure, thus far Indonesia has chosen to maintain a rigid attitude. Consequently, no improvements have been registered in the situation in East Timor. It is hoped that President Suharto's resignation will create an opportunity for real political reform and that this transitional period will be seized to foster a swift political solution for East Timor. Declarations by prominent opposition leaders indicating that a referendum in East Timor should be taken into consideration demonstrate that East Timor's "integration" in Indonesia is neither irreversible nor is it unanimously shared by Indonesian opinion.

57. The Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations has the honour to request that the present note verbale be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under items 88 and 93 of the preliminary list.

Notes

[1] Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

[2] Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, and Sao Tome and Principe.

[3] Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.